

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

JOSEPH LOGAN,

Plaintiff,

-against-

STATE OF NEW YORK DOCCS, et al.,

Defendants.

22-CV-8902 (LTS)

ORDER TO AMEND

LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN, Chief United States District Judge:

Plaintiff, who is currently incarcerated at Wallkill Correctional Facility, brings this *pro se* action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging that he was denied adequate medical care at multiple facilities while in the custody of the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (“DOCCS”). By order dated February 2, 2023, the Court granted Plaintiff’s request to proceed *in forma pauperis* (“IFP”), that is, without prepayment of fees.¹ For the reasons set forth below, the Court grants Plaintiff leave to file an amended complaint within 60 days of the date of this order.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Court must dismiss an IFP complaint, or portion thereof, that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b); *see Abbas v. Dixon*, 480 F.3d 636, 639 (2d Cir. 2007). The Court must also dismiss a complaint when the Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3).

¹ Prisoners are not exempt from paying the full filing fee even when they have been granted permission to proceed IFP. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1).

While the law mandates dismissal on any of these grounds, the Court is obliged to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and interpret them to raise the “strongest [claims] that they suggest,” *Triestman v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 470 F.3d 471, 474 (2d Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted) (emphasis in original). But the “special solicitude” in *pro se* cases, *id.* at 475 (citation omitted), has its limits – to state a claim, *pro se* pleadings still must comply with Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which requires a complaint to make a short and plain statement showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.

Rule 8 requires a complaint to include enough facts to state a claim for relief “that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). A claim is facially plausible if the plaintiff pleads enough factual detail to allow the Court to draw the inference that the defendant is liable for the alleged misconduct. In reviewing the complaint, the Court must accept all well-pleaded factual allegations as true. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009). But it does not have to accept as true “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action,” which are essentially just legal conclusions. *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555. After separating legal conclusions from well-pleaded factual allegations, the Court must determine whether those facts make it plausible – not merely possible – that the pleader is entitled to relief. *Id.*

BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleges that the medical staff at Woodbourne, Groveland, Fishkill, Collins, Midstate, and Mohawk Correctional Facilities have denied him adequate medical care. He names as defendants: the “State of New York DOCCS”; Dr. Dar Qutubuddin, employed at Groveland; Dr. Hurley (place of employment not specified); Nurse Practitioner Sullivan-Davachi, employed at Fishkill; Nurse Practitioner Campbell Sherine, employed at Fishkill; and Nurse Administrator

Tamara Kennedy (place of employment not specified). Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief and money damages. (ECF 1, at 1.)

Plaintiff provides the following as the facts of his complaint:

I Logan Joseph Plaintiff make this complaint DOCCS for medical negligence/medical malpractice inadequate medical care by it's employees of the state prison doctors nurses officials DOCCS officials Superintended's D Howard Superintended. Lt. J Coppola. A. Montegari Superintend. J Clinton Superintended.

(*Id.* at 2.)² Plaintiff further asserts that he has sustained “personal injury severe medical illness” because of “wrong inadequate medical care denial of treatment without a proper diagnosis of HIV virus suffering Hep C illness.” (*Id.*)

DISCUSSION

A. Eleventh Amendment Immunity

Plaintiff's claims against the “State of New York DOCCS must be dismissed. “[A]s a general rule, state governments may not be sued in federal court unless they have waived their Eleventh Amendment immunity, or unless Congress has abrogated the states' Eleventh Amendment immunity” *Gollomp v. Spitzer*, 568 F.3d 355, 366 (2d Cir. 2009). “The immunity recognized by the Eleventh Amendment extends beyond the states themselves to state agents and state instrumentalities that are, effectively, arms of a state.” *Id.* This immunity shields States from claims for money damages, injunctive relief, and retrospective declaratory relief. *See Green v. Mansour*, 474 U.S. 64, 72-74 (1985); *Pennhurst State Sch. & Hosp. v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 101-02 (1984). New York has not waived its Eleventh Amendment immunity to suit in federal court, and Congress did not abrogate the states' immunity in enacting 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

² The Court quotes from the complaint verbatim. Unless otherwise indicated, all grammar, spelling, punctuation, and emphasis are as in the original.

See Trotman v. Palisades Interstate Park Comm’n, 557 F.2d 35, 40 (2d Cir. 1977). Because DOCCS is an arm of the State of New York, it is protected by Eleventh Amendment immunity.

The Court therefore dismisses Plaintiff’s Section 1983 claims against DOCCS under the doctrine of Eleventh Amendment immunity, for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction. Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3); *Close v. New York*, 125 F.3d 31, 38-39 (2d Cir. 1997) (“[U]nless New York waived its immunity, the district court lacked subject matter jurisdiction.”); *Atl. Healthcare Benefits Trust v. Googins*, 2 F.3d 1, 4 (2d Cir. 1993) (“Although the parties do not address the Eleventh Amendment in their briefs, we raise it *sua sponte* because it affects our subject matter jurisdiction.”); *see* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(iii).

B. Personal Involvement

To state a claim under Section 1983, a plaintiff must allege facts showing the defendants’ direct and personal involvement in the alleged constitutional deprivation. *See Spavone v. N.Y. State Dep’t of Corr. Serv.*, 719 F.3d 127, 135 (2d Cir. 2013) (“It is well settled in this Circuit that personal involvement of defendants in the alleged constitutional deprivations is a prerequisite to an award of damages under § 1983.”) (internal quotation marks omitted). A defendant may not be held liable under Section 1983 solely because that defendant employs or supervises a person who violated the plaintiff’s rights. *See Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 676 (2009) (“Government officials may not be held liable for the unconstitutional conduct of their subordinates under a theory of respondeat superior.”). Rather, “[t]o hold a state official liable under § 1983, a plaintiff must plead and prove the elements of the underlying constitutional violation directly against the official” *Tangreti v. Bachmann*, 983 F.3d 609, 620 (2d Cir. 2020).

Here, Plaintiff names as defendants Dr. Dar Qutubuddin, Dr. Hurley, Nurse Practitioner Sullivan-Davachi, Nurse Practitioner Campbell Sherine, and Nurse Administrator Tamara Kennedy. He does not allege any facts showing how these defendants were personally involved

in the events underlying his claims. Plaintiff therefore fails to state a claim for damages under Section 1983 against these defendants in their personal capacities. However, the Court grants Plaintiff leave to amend his complaint to allege facts suggesting that each of these defendants were personally involved in denying him access to adequate medical treatment, consistent with the standard outlined below.

C. Denial of medical care

The Court understands Plaintiff to be alleging that medical staff at multiple DOCCS facilities denied him medical treatment in connection to a diagnosis of the HIV virus and illness relating to Hepatitis C. He is essentially asserting that DOCCS medical staff members were deliberately indifferent to his serious medical needs. Because Plaintiff was a convicted prisoner in DOCCS custody during the events giving rise to his claims, the claims arise under the Eighth Amendment's Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clause. *See Darnell v. Pineiro*, 849 F.3d 17, 29 (2d Cir. 2017).

To establish a claim under Section 1983 claim for inadequate medical care under the Eighth Amendment, a plaintiff must show that correction officials were deliberately indifferent to the plaintiff's serious medical condition. *See Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 104-05 (1976).

Deliberate indifference is evaluated under a two-pronged test comprised of both objective and subjective components. *See Hill v. Curcione*, 657 F.3d 116, 122 (2d Cir. 2011). The objective component requires that a prisoner "show that the conditions, either alone or in combination, pose[d] an unreasonable risk of serious damage to his health." *Darnell v. Pineiro*, 849 F.3d at 30 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). This aspect of the deliberate indifference standard "contemplates a condition of urgency such as one that may produce death, degeneration, or extreme pain." *Charles v. Orange Cnty.*, 925 F.3d 73, 86 (2d Cir. 2019). *see Harrison v. Barkley*, 219 F.3d 132, 136 (2d Cir. 2000) (holding that the medical need must be a "sufficiently

serious” condition that “could result in further significant injury or the unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain”) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted)).

The subjective component requires a prisoner to show that the defendant officials acted with a “sufficiently culpable state of mind” in depriving him of adequate medical treatment. *Nielsen v. Rabin*, 746 F.3d 58, 63 (2d Cir. 2014) (citing *Salahuddin v. Goord*, 467 F.3d 263, 280 (2d Cir. 2006)). That is, the prisoner must state facts showing that the correctional staff possessed “a state of mind that is the equivalent of criminal recklessness.” *Hathaway v. Coughlin*, 99 F.3d 550, 553 (2d Cir. 1996); see *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 837 (1994) (holding that the subjective component requires that the plaintiff show that a medical professional “was aware of facts from which the inference could be drawn that a substantial risk of serious harm exist[ed]” and that the officer drew the inference). The mere negligence of a correction official is not a basis for a claim of a federal constitutional violation under Section 1983. See *Daniels v. Williams*, 474 U.S. 327, 335-36 (1986); *Davidson v. Cannon*, 474 U.S. 344, 348 (1986).

Because Plaintiff’s complaint concerns a diagnosis of the HIV virus and illness from Hepatitis C, his assertions suggest that he faced circumstances that posed an unreasonable risk of serious damage to his health. He challenges the sufficiency of the care that he was given. Plaintiff does not, however, allege facts suggesting that any specific defendant was personally involved in depriving him of medical care; the complaint contains no facts about what occurred or how defendants were involved in the events from which his claims arose. Plaintiff does not allege that any of the named defendant knew that he faced a substantial risk of serious harm and failed to act. See *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 837.

The Court grants Plaintiff leave to submit an amended complaint to provide more facts concerning the events giving rise to his claims. Plaintiff must allege facts showing that he

suffered from a medical condition that posed an unreasonable risk of serious damage to his health, and that each named defendant was deliberately indifferent to that condition by failing to provide him adequate care.

LEAVE TO AMEND

Plaintiff proceeds in this matter without the benefit of an attorney. District courts generally should grant a self-represented plaintiff an opportunity to amend a complaint to cure its defects, unless amendment would be futile. *See Hill v. Curcione*, 657 F.3d 116, 123-24 (2d Cir. 2011); *Salahuddin v. Cuomo*, 861 F.2d 40, 42 (2d Cir. 1988). Indeed, the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit has cautioned that district courts “should not dismiss [a *pro se* complaint] without granting leave to amend at least once when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated.” *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000) (quoting *Gomez v. USAA Fed. Sav. Bank*, 171 F.3d 794, 795 (2d Cir. 1999)). Because Plaintiff may be able to allege additional facts to state a valid Section 1983 claim, the Court grants him 60 days’ leave to amend his complaint to detail his claims.

Plaintiff is granted leave to amend his complaint to provide more facts about the denial of medical care. First, Plaintiff must name as the defendants in the caption³ and in the statement of claim those individuals who were allegedly involved in the deprivation of his federal rights. If

³ The caption is located on the front page of the complaint. Each individual defendant must be named in the caption. Plaintiff may attach additional pages if there is not enough space to list all of the defendants in the caption. If Plaintiff needs to attach an additional page to list all defendants, he should write “see attached list” on the first page of the amended complaint. Any defendants named in the caption must also be discussed in Plaintiff’s statement of claim.

Plaintiff does not know the name of a defendant, he may refer to that individual as “John Doe” or “Jane Doe” in both the caption and the body of the amended complaint.⁴

Second, in the “Statement of Claim” section of the amended complaint form, Plaintiff must provide a short and plain statement of the relevant facts supporting each claim against each defendant. If Plaintiff has an address for any named defendant, Plaintiff must provide it. Plaintiff should include all of the information in the amended complaint that Plaintiff wants the Court to consider in deciding whether the amended complaint states a claim for relief. That information should include:

- a) the names and titles of all relevant people;
- b) a description of all relevant events, including what each defendant did or failed to do, the approximate date and time of each event, and the general location where each event occurred;
- c) a description of the injuries Plaintiff suffered; and
- d) the relief Plaintiff seeks, such as money damages, injunctive relief, or declaratory relief.

Essentially, Plaintiff’s amended complaint should tell the Court: who violated his federally protected rights; how, when, and where such violations occurred; and why Plaintiff is entitled to relief.

Because Plaintiff’s amended complaint will completely replace, not supplement, the original complaint, any facts or claims that Plaintiff wants to include from the original complaint must be repeated in the amended complaint.

⁴ The naming of John Doe defendants, however, does *not* toll the three-year statute of limitations period governing this action and Plaintiff shall be responsible for ascertaining the true identity of any “John Doe” defendants and amending his complaint to include the identity of any “John Doe” defendants before the statute of limitations period expires. Should Plaintiff seek to add a new claim or party after the statute of limitations period has expired, he must meet the requirements of Rule 15(c) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

CONCLUSION

The Court dismisses Plaintiff's Section 1983 claims against the "State of New York DOCCS" under the doctrine of Eleventh Amendment immunity and for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(iii); Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3).

Plaintiff is granted leave to file an amended complaint that complies with the standards set forth above. Plaintiff must submit the amended complaint to the court's Pro Se Intake Unit within 60 days of the date of this order, caption the document as an "Amended Complaint," and label the document with docket number 22-CV-8902 (LTS). An Amended Civil Rights Complaint form is attached to this order. No summons will issue at this time. If Plaintiff fails to comply within the time allowed, and he cannot show good cause to excuse such failure, the complaint will be dismissed for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii).

The Court certifies under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal from this order would not be taken in good faith, and therefore IFP status is denied for the purpose of an appeal. *Cf. Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444-45 (1962) (holding that an appellant demonstrates good faith when he seeks review of a nonfrivolous issue).

SO ORDERED.

Dated: February 17, 2023
New York, New York

/s/ Laura Taylor Swain

LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN
Chief United States District Judge

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Write the full name of each plaintiff.

-against-

____ CV ____
(Include case number if one has been assigned)

**AMENDED
COMPLAINT**
(Prisoner)

Do you want a jury trial?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Write the full name of each defendant. If you cannot fit the names of all of the defendants in the space provided, please write "see attached" in the space above and attach an additional sheet of paper with the full list of names. The names listed above must be identical to those contained in Section IV.

NOTICE

The public can access electronic court files. For privacy and security reasons, papers filed with the court should therefore *not* contain: an individual's full social security number or full birth date; the full name of a person known to be a minor; or a complete financial account number. A filing may include *only*: the last four digits of a social security number; the year of an individual's birth; a minor's initials; and the last four digits of a financial account number. See Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5.2.

I. LEGAL BASIS FOR CLAIM

State below the federal legal basis for your claim, if known. This form is designed primarily for prisoners challenging the constitutionality of their conditions of confinement; those claims are often brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 (against state, county, or municipal defendants) or in a “*Bivens*” action (against federal defendants).

☐ Violation of my federal constitutional rights

☐ Other: _____

II. PLAINTIFF INFORMATION

Each plaintiff must provide the following information. Attach additional pages if necessary.

First Name	Middle Initial	Last Name
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State any other names (or different forms of your name) you have ever used, including any name you have used in previously filing a lawsuit.

Prisoner ID # (if you have previously been in another agency’s custody, please specify each agency and the ID number (such as your DIN or NYSID) under which you were held)

Current Place of Detention

Institutional Address

County, City	State	Zip Code
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III. PRISONER STATUS

Indicate below whether you are a prisoner or other confined person:

☐ Pretrial detainee

☐ Civilly committed detainee

☐ Immigration detainee

☐ Convicted and sentenced prisoner

☐ Other: _____

IV. DEFENDANT INFORMATION

To the best of your ability, provide the following information for each defendant. If the correct information is not provided, it could delay or prevent service of the complaint on the defendant. Make sure that the defendants listed below are identical to those listed in the caption. Attach additional pages as necessary.

Defendant 1:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

Defendant 2:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

Defendant 3:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

Defendant 4:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

V. STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Place(s) of occurrence: _____

Date(s) of occurrence: _____

FACTS:

State here briefly the FACTS that support your case. Describe what happened, how you were harmed, and how each defendant was personally involved in the alleged wrongful actions. Attach additional pages as necessary.

[illegible]

INJURIES:

If you were injured as a result of these actions, describe your injuries and what medical treatment, if any, you required and received.

VI. RELIEF

State briefly what money damages or other relief you want the court to order.

VII. PLAINTIFF'S CERTIFICATION AND WARNINGS

By signing below, I certify to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief that: (1) the complaint is not being presented for an improper purpose (such as to harass, cause unnecessary delay, or needlessly increase the cost of litigation); (2) the claims are supported by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument to change existing law; (3) the factual contentions have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, will likely have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation or discovery; and (4) the complaint otherwise complies with the requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 11.

I understand that if I file three or more cases while I am a prisoner that are dismissed as frivolous, malicious, or for failure to state a claim, I may be denied *in forma pauperis* status in future cases.

I also understand that prisoners must exhaust administrative procedures before filing an action in federal court about prison conditions, 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a), and that my case may be dismissed if I have not exhausted administrative remedies as required.

I agree to provide the Clerk's Office with any changes to my address. I understand that my failure to keep a current address on file with the Clerk's Office may result in the dismissal of my case.

Each Plaintiff must sign and date the complaint. Attach additional pages if necessary. If seeking to proceed without prepayment of fees, each plaintiff must also submit an IFP application.

Dated	Plaintiff's Signature
First Name	Middle Initial
	Last Name
Prison Address	
County, City	State
	Zip Code

Date on which I am delivering this complaint to prison authorities for mailing: _____